NUMB. CXXVII.

The Prompter.

Arcades Ambo,
Et cantare pares, & reſpondere parati.

Both Managers, and both alike inſpir'd
To act, what neither Senſe, *nor* Wit, *requir'd.* VIRGIL.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 27. 1736.

THE Words of my Motto were ſaid of two young Shepherds, who ſtrove to excel in *a Poetical Conteſt*, by a Diſplay of Genius, in mutual Oppoſition to each other. The Reverſe may be ſaid of the Managers of our Theatres, who ſtrive to *expoſe* each other, in a *Pantomimical Conteſt*, by a Diſplay of Genius *Both* ſhould be aſham'd to *own*. The *Recommendation of Poetry* was the *Burden* of the Shepherd's Song; The *Deſtruction of it*, the *Soul* of the Managers Purpoſe. It is impoſſible to read the Account *Melibœus* gives of the Poetical Strife, without feeling the moſt exquiſite Delight, that Species of Poetry is productive of: It is impoſſible to ſee the horrid Violation of the Theatre, without feeling the moſt exquiſite Pain, Senſe and Reflection muſt create in thoſe who are capable of either. I forbear to puſh the Compariſon any further at preſent, intending to preſent my Readers, unleſs I ſee Reaſons to the Contrary, with a full Deduction of it, after the Manner of *Virgil*'s ſeventh Paſtoral, from whence I have taken the Motto to this Day's Paper.

THE following Pacquet I found at home, at my Return from the *Royal Chace*; which I publiſh as an Introduction to what I have to ſay in This, previous to my *Theatrick Eclogue*. It came incloſed to me in a very impertinent Letter, ſign'd *Levity Brainleſs*, which I forbear to print, that I may not diſoblige ſo numerous a Body, by expoſing their Head.

Manifeſto, *or* Declaration, *of all the Pretty Fellows, in and about This Great Metropolis.*

WHEREAS ſeveral ſcandalous defamatory Libels have lately been publiſh'd in a Paper called *The Prompter*, highly reflecting upon the many *elegant Shews*, and *Pantomimical Entertainments*, which the ingenious Managers of both Theatres daily contrive and imagine, for the Amuſement, and Diverſion, as well as Edification of Perſons of Taſte and Diſtinction: And Whereas a moſt audacious Attempt has been made by the aforeſaid Author, to caſt an *Odium* upon the late Addition to Modern Taſte, by the Incorporation of *Rope-Dancing*, and *Tumbling*, to *Singing*, and *Pantomime*; and that he has preſumed, in Defiance of Publick Sanction and Applauſe, to recommend *Old Engliſh Senſe*, in Derogation of *Modern Politeneſs*, WE therefore, underwritten, in behalf of ourſelves, and all *Gentlemen of our Faſhion*, who have travelled for the *Improvement of Taſte*, being willing to obviate the *miſchievous Impreſſions* which The IGNORANT may receive from ſuch *ſcandalous* and *libellous* Inſinuations, Do HEREBY DECLARE AND CERTIFY, That OLD ENGLISH SENSE, is MERE BRUTALITY; that TRAGEDY and COMEDY are its NURSES, and as ſuch, deſerve to be totally *baniſh'd from the Stage*, unleſs they conſent to be ſupported by *Pantomime*, *Rope-Dancing*, and *Tumbling*: And We hereby further Declare, That if they preſume to appear on their own Bottom, we will hiſs them off the Stage, and let their inſolent Authors know, *The Theatre* can *ſubſiſt* without their *Help*.

WE think Ourſelves obliged in Gratitude, in the Name of all true Encouragers of Politeneſs, to return our moſt ſincere and hearty Thanks, to the Managers of both Theatres, for the unweary'd Labour they beſtow, in contriving new Entertainments, to the entire Excluſion of the aforeſaid Nurſes of *Impoliteneſs*. And we confeſs our Acknowledgments in particular, are due to the incomparable Mr. *Lunn*, who firſt open'd this inexhauſtible Fountain of Delight, which now flows daily in, upon us, and which we hope, will ſoon waſh away from Remembrance, the leaſt Remains of the Old *Theatrick Exhibitions*, for *Entertainments* we cannot call them.

TO *Him* we owe the moſt *facetious* Harlequin, and agreeable *Pierot*. By *Him* the *Britiſh* Theatre was firſt honour'd with *Gods* and *Goddeſſes*, *Devils* and *Machines*. To *Him* is due the Diſcovery of the wonderful Extent of Human Genius and Ability, by convincing us, that our Species is the moſt perfect in the Creation: For we now plainly ſee, that MAN, MERE MAN, can perſonate a *Dog*, a *Cat*, a *Monkey*, a *Bear*, *&c.* to ſuch a Degree of Similitude, as to *deceive the Sight*. We are ſorry, however, to find, he cannot compaſs ſo ridiculous an Animal as *a Pig*; but are in hopes in time he may.

WHAT can raiſe the *Britiſh* Reputation to a more elevated Point of Glory, than to have it known, that HERE ALONE, the ableſt Profeſſors of Grimace, Dance, Song, and Pantomime in *Europe*, have the Honour to perform before CROWDED AUDIENCES, compoſed of Men and Women of the firſt Rank and Quality? Does not This ſpeak the Nation as wiſe as it poſſibly can be? Would it not betray Ignorance to admit of other Sorts of Inſtructors? Is not the Arrogance of Poets intolerable, that preſume to *inſtruct* or *divert*, by rheir *barren Productions*? What is it we want but *Amuſement*? And the Meaſure of our Satisfaction is almoſt full, by the Care of our Managers, to whom we earneſtly recommend to think of NO NEW PLAYS, but to continue to exhibit all the rare Creatures, Monſters, and Exotick Animals, that can be brought hither from the moſt remote Corners of the Earth. FOR SUCH IS OUR WILL AND PLEASURE.

Signed,
Guegaw, *Rattle*, *Headpiece*, } Lords.
Delicate Courtairs, Bar.
Finikin Smart, Bar.
Languiſh Trifle, Eſq;

THERE is a Time when it is impoſſible to *laugh* Folly out of Countenance; when Satire, which, with its Deſign of expoſing what it is directed againſt, carries along with it, good-natured Raillery, and ſhews the Heart *not touched* with an *offenſive* Diſpoſition, ſhall have no Effect. In ſuch Caſe, It becomes a Neceſſity to employ Weapons, that MAY BE FELT. When we are ſo harden'd as *to laugh at our own Follies*, It is not to be expected they will ever be reformed, when Others *only laugh*. This, however, has been the Method hitherto practiſed by *The Prompter*. He has not ſhewn Ill-Will againſt

the

the *Proprietor of any Folly* he has expoſed, but only againſt the *Folly*. The Perſon that has the moſt Reaſon to complain of him is the *Drayman*, at the *Pegaſus*; but his Caſe required Severity, and his Behaviour to others juſtified the Uſe of *offenſive* Arms againſt him.

THE *Prompter* has beſtowed ſeveral Papers upon Theatrick Affairs; upon *Managers* and *Actors*; He has been *ſerious* but never *ill-natured*; He has laugh'd at *Follies*, but not at *Perſons*. He has commended *ſome*, and cenſured *others*, and done both with an Eye to their Good; and not to *flatter* or *blame*, thro' a *kind* or *unkind Partiality*. This is the Method he firſt laid down for his Conduct, and is determined to continue to purſue. BUT WHEN FOLLIES ARE BECOME TOO GREAT FOR LAUGHTER, THEY ARE NO LONGER TO BE LAUGH'D AT.

THE CORRUPTION of the Stage is now arrived to ſuch a Height, that unleſs ſome Stop is put to it, it muſt end in its *total Deſtruction*. *Pantomimes* are now no longer to be conſider'd as only *harmleſs*, or *ridiculous Entertainments*, but as Uſurpers that will entirely root out Tragedy and Comedy, by rendering *both inſipid* to the Town, whoſe Taſte will be reduc'd to a *mere Habit*, and be form'd to reliſh ONLY what it daily feeds on.

IF the Stage is a mere Name, that ſignifies a Publick Place for Exhibition of Spectacles to a People, then *Sadlers Wells*, *Bartholomew Fair*, *Fawkes's Dexterity of Hand*, *Cups and Balls*, the *Bear Garden* and *Prizefighters* may properly be called THE STAGE. But if to the Word STAGE, we annex the Idea of TRAGEDY and COMEDY, then we muſt exclude as ESSENTIALS to it, what now we are haſtening (by corrupting the publick Taſte) to make its ſole *Support* and *Eſſence*.

IF the Stage of *Great Britain* is to be recorded by Hiſtory to late Times, as thoſe of *Athens* or *Rome*, and that Poſterity is to judge of our Taſte by the preſent State of the Stage, then is it a publick *Honour* or *Diſgrace* to a Nation, as it approaches *Purity*, or ſinks to vile *Corruption*.

IF this is a Reflection true in itſelf, and it is not impoſſible but it may reach the Ears of the Great, let our Managers coolly reflect, whether the *publick Honour* or *Diſgrace* of a Nation is not the *Concern* of *the higheſt* in the Nation; and if it once is thought of, in this Manner, WHERE IT SHOULD, let them carry their Reflection a little farther, and ask themſelves, What They have to anſwer for, by ſuch a monſtrous Abuſe of a *Royal Patent*, given for the general Inſtruction, and rational Diverſion of a People, who are to be taught by Repreſentations from the Stage, their ſeveral Duties in their different Stations in Life, or to relax from their daily Occupations, by ſuch Scenes of Amuſement, as may, without *Meanneſs*, *pleaſe*.

I AM perſonally acquainted with both Managers (tho' unknown to them in the Character of *The Prompter*) and eſteem them Both, as Men of amiable Diſpoſitions, and for other Qualities which thoſe who are acquainted with them will eaſily point out to themſelves. But were I *link'd* to them in the cloſeſt Intimacy of Friendſhip, Not *That*, nor the *greateſt Obligations* ſhould buy my Silence, in ſuch a *glaring* and *pernicious* Series of *Miſmanagement*, or engage my Pen in ſupport of it.

I THINK I cannot give Them a greater Inſtance of my Regard, than in endeavouring to root out the bad Taſte, that prevails at preſent ſo much; and ſhewing how much they debaſe their Underſtandings and Characters, *as Men of Senſe*, when they contribute towards the keeping it up, by Entertainments adapted to it, inſtead of ſtemming the Torrent, by what muſt, in the End, *correct* and *reform* it. But I muſt refer my further Conſiderations of this Subject to my next Paper, for Want of room in this. I ſhall therein alledge every Thing that can poſſibly be ſaid in favour of the Managers, and as fully anſwer it: After which I ſhall propoſe ſome effectual Methods for remedying this prepoſterous Condition of the Stage; ſome in the Breaſts of the Managers, others independant of them, and to be effectuated without them, in caſe their Ears are deaf to the Voice of Reaſon.

I SHALL conclude this, with acquainting my Readers, That of all the evil Conſequences that muſt neceſſarily flow from the Encouragement of Pantomimes, that which is ſo clearly pointed out in the following Letter, ſeem'd to be ſo *deciſively fatal* to Tragedy and Comedy, that it determined me to conſider this Subject in its full Extent, and not to drop it, till the two only Supporters of the Stages are reſtored to their due Rank, or elſe entirely baniſhed the *Theatres Royal*; in which Caſe a Subſcription will be carry'd on for erecting a New Houſe, in which Plays alone will be exhibited, and where the Actors in both the preſent Houſes, who are quite uſeleſs, will have an Opportunity of exerting their Talents, and not be loſt to the World.

To the PROMPTER.

SIR, *Jan.* 25, 1735-6.

I HAVE a Play now in Rehearſal, and almoſt ready to appear. It would ill become me to ſpeak in favour of it; but I will venture to ſay, That the beſt Play that ever was wrote, brought on at this Criſis, would not fill a Houſe three Nights together, againſt a Pantomime at the other. What is to be done in this Caſe? The Managers have ſo diſuſed the Town to *naked Plays*, that if mine comes on without an Entertainment, I muſt be ſacrificed—If *with one*—What a Diſgrace that Dramatick Pieces ſhould owe their Support to ſuch Shews as are only fit for the loweſt Claſs of People? In ſhort, Sir, I am in the greateſt Anxiety in the World; for tho' I do not feel that blind Fondneſs Parents generally feel for their Children, I wou'd not, methinks, have it come into the World, under the greateſt of Diſadvantages. Your Reflections on this Head may be of Service to many others, and, in particular, to

Sir, *Your Admirer*,

LARVA.

P.

P. S. The Letters ſign'd *A. B.* are Both, tho' but late, come to hand. If the Author will *extend* himſelf in ſome of the Subjects he recommends, he will find due Regard will be paid to them. Hitherto they have been, more properly ſpeaking, Hints, without Execution.

ADVERTISEMENT.

WHEREAS the Ghoſt of the deceaſed *Reverend Captain Bavius* continues to walk, and haunt the old Place of His Abode, Theſe are to acquaint ſuch, whom his *Re-Appearance* may be diſagreeable to, that Care will be taken to *lay him*, after he has walk'd to the End of the Philoſopher's Prayer.

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